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## **Homogeneity of party elites' social backgrounds and the survival of new political parties: Evidence from Slovakia**

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# Universiteit Leiden

## **Homogeneity of party elites' social backgrounds and the survival of new political parties: Evidence from Slovakia**

Master Thesis

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## **Abstract**

Contemporary European politics has seen a surge of new political parties successfully gaining political representation across the national parliaments. However, many disintegrate soon after recording their parliamentary breakthrough, but some manage to survive and establish themselves in their party systems. What can explain these contrasting fates? First, a brief review of the available literature on the topic is presented and various theories are examined, which leads to the specification of the research question: “Does the homogeneity of party elites’ social backgrounds increase the likelihood of new party survival?” This thesis aims to contribute to the empirical research on the survival of new parties and answer the research question using a qualitative analysis of an extensive dataset of party elites’ social backgrounds in five new political parties in Slovakia. The research did not find compelling evidence to support the hypothesis that the homogeneity of party elites’ social backgrounds increases the likelihood of new party survival. The thesis concludes by discussing the reasons for this, explores alternative explanations, addresses its limitations and identifies areas for further research.

## **Introduction**

European multi-party political systems have recently been experiencing a phenomenon of an increasing number of successful new political parties of various ideological positions, that challenge the established political actors. Voting behavior has become more volatile and the nature of political competition is also changing, with the long dominant socio-economic cleavages giving way to new salient issues (De Vries 2022). But while some of the new parties succeed also in the long term, many disintegrate soon after their parliamentary breakthrough or fade away quietly after failing to reenter the national parliaments (Bolleyer and Bytzek 2013). “Why do some parties live fast and die young, but others endure?” (Deegan-Krause & Haughton 2018, 473). What can explain their contrasting fates? A better understanding of the dynamics of new party survival could have important implications for the strategic decisions of party elites, as well as for the voting preferences of citizens, which could consequently influence the outcomes of elections. The disappearance of a party from parliament may leave a group of voters unrepresented or without sufficient political representation (Zur 2019). Discovering why some new parties succeed and others do not also contributes to the understanding of how new party systems form and stabilize. Knowing what type of new parties are more likely to succeed in new developing democracies is also of importance as “these parties determine which of the preexisting cleavages become politicized and thereby define the bases of future political competition” (Tavits 2012, 83).

The period following the initial success in parliamentary elections has proven to be crucial for political newcomers. New parties face a variety of pressures arising from their new responsibilities after gaining parliamentary representation. As they are organizationally young, these pressures threaten their organizational stability (Beyens et al. 2015). Party failure and disintegration can often be accounted to weak party organization or internal conflicts resulting in member defections. Other parties, however, manage to survive the challenging period after their electoral breakthrough and successfully establish themselves in party systems. Some

research has already been conducted regarding the reasons why new parties succeed (e.g., Bolleyer 2013; Bolleyer and Bytzeck 2013; Beyens et al. 2015; Rydgren 2009; Tavits 2008b; Obert and Müller 2017). However, why these new parties have contrasting fates in terms of organizational survival after their parliamentary breakthrough has not been widely studied. This thesis aims to contribute to the empirical research on the survival of new parties and presents the following research question: “Does the homogeneity of party elites’ social backgrounds increase the likelihood of new party survival?” I review the current state of literature on the topic, explain the various concepts used in the literature and in this thesis, come up with a hypothesis and provide the methodology of my research to test the hypothesis. I then analyze the extensive data collected on the social backgrounds of party elites in five new political parties in Slovakia. The research did not find compelling evidence to support the hypothesis that the homogeneity of party elites’ social backgrounds increases the likelihood of new party survival. The thesis concludes by discussing the reasons for this, explores alternative explanations, addresses its limitations and identifies areas for further research.

## **Literature review and theory**

There is a growing body of literature focusing on the phenomenon of new parties, but it is still limited regarding their survival and there is no general theory of new party survival or sustainability. Existing research focuses mainly on why new parties succeed electorally using specific factors such as socio-economic conditions or the institutional setting (Obert and Müller 2017). Furthermore, the available literature shows a certain bias as studies have mostly covered two party families - the green and the radical right parties (Beyens et al. 2015; Rydgren 2009). Theory of political change points out that in Western Europe, the decline of mainstream parties accompanied by the rise of political outsiders is not an entirely new phenomenon. The recent rise of populist radical right parties is just another wave of challenger parties, just like the social

democrats and green parties in the past. Political change is driven by innovation of the challenger parties, which introduce new policy issues and discredit the dominant parties by employing anti-establishment rhetoric (Vries & Hobolt 2020, 59).

Why parties die or endure “is much more of a puzzle in Central Europe” (Haughton & Deegan-Krause 2021, 144). The nature of party competition has changed recently across the region, as traditional socio-economic cleavages are being substituted by a “clean” versus “corrupt” dimension of political competition, which is utilized by new parties in their projection against the parties in power. This helps explain the growing success of new parties through the use of their appeal of novelty (Haughton et al., 2022). However, as the appeal of novelty helps the new parties to quickly succeed, it is also often the reason for their demise. New parties cannot stay new forever and the key to their survival is “the combination of—and interaction between—organization, appeals, and leadership” (Haughton & Deegan-Krause 2021, 170).

One comprehensive explanation links the sustainability of new parties after their breakthrough to their ability to institutionalize, which depends on party origin - whether parties are founded by individual entrepreneurs or rooted party formations. Institutionalization is described as a complex process “by which party followers develop an interest in the survival of a party as such, independent of its current leadership” (Bolleyer and Bytzeck 2013, 776). Furthermore, it increases “routinization”, which consolidates decision making, as well as “value infusion”, which results from an emotional attachment to the party. These dimensions affect the capability of a party to cope with the pressures of public office by “improving its capacities of coordination and conflict-resolution and decreasing the likelihood of defections” (Bolleyer and Bytzeck 2013, 776). New parties can be formed by individuals who are not affiliated to already organized groups or by already existing organizations or groups. The latter have been found to be more

likely to institutionalize, and thus these parties are more sustainable and have a higher chance of survival (Bolleyer 2013; Bolleyer and Bytzek 2013).

Other factors related to the organizational stability of new parties, which could explain why some are more vulnerable to internal conflicts that can lead to party disintegration, are understudied. One approach that addresses this gap in the literature is to link the concept of party cohesion to the composition of party elites in terms of their social backgrounds. Party elites with homogenous social backgrounds contribute to party cohesion by forming social circles or networks, which then contribute to a stronger resistance to intra-party conflicts and defections, and in turn positively affect party survival (Cirhan and Kopecky 2017). Therefore, the survival chances of new parties are increased when parties are formed by existing organizational groups or when there is high cohesion among party elites.

The cohesion of party elites depends on several common social background factors, such as educational and occupational past or social origin (Cirhan and Kopecky 2017). The study by Cirhan and Kopecky (2017) demonstrated the importance of party cohesion for the survival of newly formed political parties in the Czech Republic. Party cohesion was stronger in those parties whose elite composition was more homogenous. To determine this, the authors used data on professional and career backgrounds of elite members of three selected parties. The similarity of party members' backgrounds then determined the level of party cohesion and provided an explanation for why some parties failed to survive internal conflicts and disintegrated, while others persisted (Cirhan and Kopecky 2017).

This thesis introduces several concepts whose meanings need to be clarified, such as party survival, party unity, party cohesion, social backgrounds or party elites. Party survival is the ability of a new party to retain its MPs in the electoral period following its parliamentary breakthrough, and its subsequent reelection is known as party persistence. A case when a party

loses its MPs and has its parliamentary club dissolved or ultimately ceases to exist as an organization, is referred to as party disintegration. Party survival is also related to the concepts of party unity and party cohesion. Party unity is often observed as the unity of MPs in their legislative behavior - in voting. When this unity is achieved voluntarily, it is called party cohesion. Unity can also be enforced through various tools and mechanisms available to the party leader, and this is called party discipline rather than cohesion (Andeweg and Thomassen 2010). Party discipline can be strict and is usually found in parties with a strong hierarchical organization, often with a dominant or even autocratic position of the party leader (Close and Nunez 2016; Bailer 2018). In democratic parties, party discipline plays only a minor role in achieving party unity, which results mainly from MPs' voluntarism (Van Vonn 2016). Party ideology is another pathway leading to party unity, which can be achieved through ideological homogeneity or agreement and can be observed, for instance, in green, communist or far right parties (Close and Nunez 2016).

There are many explanations and uses of the concept of party cohesion and diverse ways to achieve it. Since cohesion is not enforced like party discipline but is achieved naturally, it is closely related to the fact that political parties are not unitary actors but groupings of individuals with different ways thinking, norms or policy preferences. Therefore, homogeneity among party members can lead to a more cohesive party, while heterogeneity reduces cohesion and may lead to intra-party conflicts. This homogeneity can be understood as a shared understanding between party members and can be formed by various similarities between them. These can be formed by their common social backgrounds and shared past experiences, such as educational background or previous occupations (Cirhan and Kopecky 2017).

Cohesion among members of a political institution is essential for the stability and continued development of that institution, especially among party elites (Suthanintr 1985). Common social backgrounds facilitate ties between party elites by creating shared sets of values that

strengthen their relationships (Cirhan and Kopecky 2017). Agreement among elites is considered essential for political stability and a highly integrated elite is likely to exhibit relatively little conflict (Moore 1979, 674). Since the homogeneity of the social backgrounds of party elites may affect party cohesion, and since party cohesion may affect party survival, it seems plausible to investigate this relationship further in an attempt to explain the survival of new parties. Therefore, this thesis uses the homogeneity of party elites' social backgrounds to explain the organizational survival of new parties after their parliamentary breakthrough.

Studies that analyze the social backgrounds of political elites are common in political science. Scholars have linked the influence of social background, for example, to the policy formation and decisions of policymakers or to the attitudes and preferences of legislators (Lewis 1970). Data on the social backgrounds of political elites most commonly include gender, age, ethnicity, education, occupation and parliamentary experience, and have been collected and analyzed in many countries around the world (e.g., Audickas and Barton 2017; Courtney 2015; Gallagher 1985; Van Haute et al. 2012). There have also been studies in the past that have specifically analyzed the homogeneity of elites' social backgrounds (e.g., Kim and Patterson 1988; Sekulic and Sporer 2002; Suthanintr 1985; Cirhan and Kopecky 2017).

Political elites with homogenous social backgrounds form social circles whose members have similar socialization experiences and hold similar political attitudes, which in turn positively affects party cohesion (Cirhan and Kopecky 2017). The analysis of social backgrounds uses only those factors that are considered important for organizational strength and party survival. These are educational and occupational backgrounds, and organizational links. Similar previous occupations among party elites can facilitate a socializing effect and lead to homogeneous attitudes, shared values, and stronger relationships (Suthanintr 1985). Similarly, a common background in higher education specialization, or a lack of higher education whatsoever, can create social circles within the party with shared values, mind-sets or forms of communication

that then have a positive effect on the party's cohesiveness and organizational strength. The same can be said of shared prior organizational ties, as elites who have previously worked within the same organizational structure will form a tighter social circle. In cases where party elites not only share the same professional past but also have common organizational links, “they are likely to form an informal network within the party structure that is similar to friendship” (Cirhan and Kopecky 2017, 123). Social cohesion is particularly important for new political parties because, unlike established parties, their organizational structure is young and not yet stabilized and institutionalized. New parties are organizationally vulnerable and a rapid electoral success puts new responsibilities and pressures on new MPs, increasing the risk of intra-party conflict. Established parliamentary parties have the advantage of having members with parliamentary experience and familiarity with the legislative process, which most members of new parties lack.

## **Research Design and Case Selection**

Building on the research design of Cirhan and Kopecky (2017), this thesis applies a qualitative research method using a comparative case study of five political parties and employs the most similar systems design in which the cases are similar to each other in most aspects but differ on the dependent and independent variable. This allows me to test how the homogeneity of party elites' social backgrounds impacts party survival. The chosen method of analysis is interpretive as I use theory to form a hypothesis which is then tested using data analysis to confirm or infirm the hypothesis. The cases used for the research are political parties in Slovakia. Slovakia was selected because it represents a typical case of a European multiparty system with a party-list proportional representation voting system, in which new parties succeed. The Slovak party system is characterized by “a large number of parties, low party identification and high electoral volatility” (Haughton et al., 2022, 749). Therefore, the country offers a sufficient number of

suitable cases for the purpose of this research. Other countries with a similar political system where new parties succeed and could therefore also be considered for this research are for instance Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, or Spain. I focus on one country as collecting data on the social background of party elites is resource-intensive and I expect the case of Slovakia to offer a generalizability of the findings to other suitable cases. Slovakia is also a convenient choice because it is my country of origin and therefore, I possess knowledge of the country's language and politics.

The Slovak party system was considered relatively stable in the 2000s, with a small number of strong parties that did not allow much room for new parties to succeed (Bakke and Sitter 2013). This has changed in recent years, however, with a relatively large number of new parties gaining representation in the National Council (the Slovak parliament). Since the 2010 parliamentary elections, at least one political newcomer has been successful in each of the elections. The fate of these new parties has been mixed: plagued by internal conflicts and various scandals, some have disintegrated shortly after succeeding in the elections, while others have managed to survive.

As showcased in Table 1.1, the case selection process includes 9 relevant new political parties that have entered the Slovak parliament since the 2002 elections until 2020. The party system in Slovakia only stabilized after the turn of the millennium and therefore the parliamentary elections of the 1990s are not considered relevant (Bakke and Sitter 2013).

Table 1.1 Case selection (selected parties in bold)

Party	Formation	Break-through	New	Position*	Strong ideology	Survival
<b>ANO</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Right Wing Liberal</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
Smer-SD	1999	2002	Splinter	Centre-Left Populist	No	Yes
Most-Híd	2009	2010	Splinter	Centre-Right	No	Yes
<b>SaS</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Right Wing Liberal</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>OĽaNO</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Centre-Right Conservative Populist</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Siet'</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Centre-Right Conservative</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
Sme Rodina	2015	2016	Yes	Far Right Anti- Immigrant	Yes- Untraditional	Yes
ĽSNS	2010	2016	No	Far Right	Yes- NeoNazism	Yes
<b>Za Ľudí</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Centre/Centre-Right</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No<sup>†</sup></b>

Regarding the specific cases to be used in the research, I have selected five new parties for analysis and comparison using the most similar systems design. The selected parties are similar to each other in many aspects but differ on the dependent variable – party survival, as well as on the independent variable – homogeneity of social backgrounds. The parties are similar in their small size and low seat share as none of them won a significant share of the vote, and they were founded in a similar time frame before the elections. The case selection also contains only parties on the right side of the political spectrum, which may present a certain bias. This selection is not intentional, but as the Slovak political right has been more saturated with successful new parties, there were no suitable parties on the left meeting the selection criteria. On the other hand, it makes the cases more similar, but I expect the relationship between the social homogeneity of party elites and party survival will be the same in the parties positioned

\* The perceived political position of parties at the time of their formation, thus not taking into account any future position shifts

† Za Ľudí succeeded in the 2020 parliamentary elections and thus, at the time of writing this thesis, the electoral period has not yet ended. The party has not yet fully disintegrated, but it has lost all but one of its MPs in its ongoing first parliamentary term, and its parliamentary club was dissolved in 2021. Therefore, it is treated in this thesis as a party that has disintegrated

on the left, as long as they also do not have a strong ideological orientation, i.e., they do not belong to the radical left.

In this case selection I also control for strength of ideology, which is operationalized by whether a party has a strong ideological orientation, which can be observed in green, communist, far-right, neo-Nazi or other extremist parties. Ideology can be a strong factor enhancing party cohesion as elites with different social backgrounds can be united around an ideology (Close and Nunez 2016). Therefore, since a strong ideology strengthens party cohesion, it improves the chances of party survival, and thus I exclude parties that fall into the category of ideologically dominant parties.

Regarding the selection of new parties, what qualifies as a “new party” differs across the literature. In this thesis I adopt the definition used by Hug (2001, 4) and define a new political party as “a genuinely new organization that appoints, for the first time, candidates at a general election to the system’s representative assembly”. Therefore, new parties recording electoral breakthroughs are parties that ran in elections for the first time and succeeded in gaining representation in the National Council. At the same time, they must have been formed at the earliest during the previous electoral period. New parties that were formed as a splinter, merged or a successor party are able to build on pre-existing experience and structures and are expected to be better equipped to survive (Beyens et al. 2015). Therefore, these parties cannot be considered as genuinely new parties and will not be selected for this research. This allows for a more targeted examination of the relationship between the homogeneity of party elites and party survival, as it excludes parties that were able to build their organization over a longer period of time, or parties that inherited preexisting organizational ties and were thus able to achieve a more stable organization.

Therefore, after defining the selection process and criteria, the parties used for this research are: *ANO* (Alliance of the New Citizen), *SaS* (Freedom and Solidarity), *OLaNO* (Ordinary People and Independent Personalities), *Siet'* (Network), and *Za Ľudí* (For the People).

*ANO* and *SaS* were, at the time of their formation, perceived as belonging to the right-wing liberal party family, while *OLaNO* and *Siet'* were considered as being center-right conservative parties. The most recent new party to enter the National Council, *Za Ľudí*, occupies the center to center-right position. Although all these parties were challenged by various scandals and internal conflicts, their fates were different. *SaS* and *OLaNO* entered the parliament in 2010 and 2012 respectively, both survived their first electoral period and succeeded in all the following elections as well. *ANO* recorded its parliamentary breakthrough in 2002 but lost many of its MPs and disintegrated. *Siet'* entered the parliament in 2016 and lost all its MPs in the span of a year, as they all left the party which disintegrated afterwards. *Za Ľudí* succeeded in the 2020 elections but has since lost all but one of its MPs and its parliamentary club dissolved in 2021. It is therefore classified as a disintegrated party, even though the electoral period has not yet ended and the party itself has not yet ceased to exist. The selected parties are all considered small parties, but as social homogeneity is a measurable aspect in both small and large parties, I expect that if it affects party survival in small parties, it should also apply to large parties. Therefore, the selection of only small parties should not present a limitation of this thesis.

The case selection excludes *Most-Híd* (Bridge in Slovak and Hungarian respectively) as it was formed as a splinter party of *SMK* (both Hungarian ethnic minority parties). The same applies to *Smer-SD* (Direction-Social Democracy) which was formed as a splinter party of *SDL* and recorded an electoral breakthrough in 2002. Furthermore, the parties used are classified as similar in terms of their political orientation in the traditional ideological spectrum. Therefore, the far-right, neo-Nazi party *ĽSNS* (People's Party Our Slovakia), which entered the parliament

in 2016, will also not be included in the research as it diverges considerably from the other parties in terms of ideological strength, as well as it does not satisfy the condition of being a genuinely new party since it was formed 6 years prior to its parliamentary breakthrough. The party *Sme Rodina* (We are Family) also recorded an electoral breakthrough in 2016 and can be regarded as a populist, conservative, anti-immigration movement, often labeled as far-right. Therefore, it is also not selected for its strong ideological divergence from the selected, more traditional parties.

## **Variables and Operationalization**

The dependent variable is *party survival* and is of dichotomous nature. It is operationalized by either the retainment or loss of a new party's members of parliament and its parliamentary club during its first electoral period. The independent variable is *homogeneity of social backgrounds* which is measured as the level of homogeneity in three attributes of the party elites' social backgrounds: educational, occupational and organizational. In terms of educational backgrounds, I am looking at specific fields of higher education such as law, business administration or social sciences and these are then sorted into generalized categories. Occupational backgrounds are the previous occupations of the party elites and these are also grouped into more general categories. In the last social background of organizational links, I am searching for organizational or professional links between the party elites, whether they worked together in the past or were part of the same organization, party or company.

Since there is a clear expectation of the outcome of this research, a hypothesis can be formulated, and it is as follows: "*Greater homogeneity of party elites' social backgrounds should have a positive effect on the organizational survival of new political parties*". The hypothesis is tested using an extensive dataset containing party elites' social backgrounds of five parties in Slovakia.

As I test my hypothesis and analyze the results of my research, I need to prepare for alternative explanations of the studied phenomenon of new party survival, especially when the hypothesis is not confirmed. I include a control variable for gender in my research since it may influence party cohesion, as there is some evidence that women are less prone to rebel or voice disagreement in a party (Close 2018). A higher proportion of women in a party should contribute positively to cohesion, thus affecting both the dependent variable of party survival and the independent variable. This control variable is operationalized as the ratio of women to men among the party elites.

Government participation of new parties comes up as another potential alternative explanation and control variable, as it puts even more pressure on new parties, which could prove fatal to new inexperienced parties with young structures. Staying in opposition could be more suitable for new parties to establish themselves in the political arena, with less responsibilities than the government parties. However, since my case selection includes 4 parties that participated in government and with differing fates, and only 1 studied party did not enter government in its first electoral period, it does not seem plausible to include government participation as a control variable. As further alternative explanations may arise during the analysis, I will assess them in the discussion section.

### **Methodology of data collection and analysis**

The analysis of the social backgrounds of party elites focuses on discovering their previous occupations, academic backgrounds and organizations, companies or parties they had been part of in the past. It is subsequently possible to determine whether there are any common occupational and educational backgrounds or organizational links between the elites. These can reveal whether there are any pre-existing social circles or networks within the party, which in

turn contribute to the party's cohesion and thus its chances of survival. (Cirhan and Kopecky 2017).

Regarding the sample of party elites, I analyze the backgrounds of all the members of parliament for the respective parties, party leadership members and potential members of the government. Party leadership consists of party president, vice-presidents and members of the presidium. Elites in the party leadership are chosen according to their positions at the time of the parties' success in elections, so that any changes to the leadership following member defections are not considered. Substitutes for MPs that had taken a role in government as well as for MPs that had given up their mandates are also considered party elites. In terms of data collection and sources, the data on party elites' social backgrounds are gathered by conducting elite profile research using the internet. Specifically, on websites of the respective political parties<sup>‡</sup>, personal websites, in lists of electoral candidates, through internet search engines such as Google, social media platforms such as LinkedIn and, when available, from their CVs. In order to study elites who are no longer members of their parties, or the parties and their websites do not exist anymore, the services of the internet archive website "Wayback Machine" are employed<sup>§</sup>.

The analysis of the collected data covers all party elites, which are then sorted into tables for each party in the appendix. These tables contain the names of the party elites, their party position, gender (control variable), social backgrounds, and potential defections from the party. The data on individual elite's social backgrounds are sorted into more general categories, and a level of homogeneity can then be calculated.

In order to determine the level of homogeneity among the elite party members in the educational and occupational backgrounds categories, I use the Normalized Herfindahl index (NHI). The

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<sup>‡</sup> Sloboda a Solidarita: <http://www.sas.sk/>; Obyčajní Ludia a Nezávislé Osobnosti: <http://www.obycajniludia.sk/>; Za Ludi: <https://stranazaludi.sk>

<sup>§</sup> The Wayback Machine: <https://web.archive.org/>; [https://web.archive.org/web/\\*/www.strana-sas.sk](https://web.archive.org/web/*/www.strana-sas.sk); [https://web.archive.org/web/\\*/www.ano-aliancia.sk](https://web.archive.org/web/*/www.ano-aliancia.sk)

Herfindahl index (HI) is primarily used in economics to measure market concentration and monopoly power, or the degree of competition among organizations in a sector. The advantage of the HI over other forms of measurement is that it gives more weight to larger firms, which is useful for my research as I am looking for dominant social background categories. The HI is calculated as the sum of the squares of the shares of different educational or occupational backgrounds in the total number of educational or occupational backgrounds among party elites (Kelly 2016).

$$HI = \sum_{i=1}^n s_i^2$$

$$NHI = \frac{HI - \frac{1}{n}}{1 - \frac{1}{n}}$$

The HI ranges from  $1/n$  to 1, where  $n$  is the total number of educational or occupational background categories represented among the party elites. I use the normalized Herfindahl index (NHI) in order to make political parties with different  $n$  comparable, as it does not depend on the number of categories and its value ranges from 0 to 1. The higher the index value, the higher the concentration and thus specifically in this case, the homogeneity of social backgrounds. The European Commission provides a classification of concentration levels when using the Herfindahl Index\*\*. It is as follows: index values below 0.1 are considered unconcentrated, values between 0.1 and 0.2 indicate moderate concentration and values above 0.2 indicate high concentration. A value of 1 means that there is a single monopoly of one firm in a market, or in this case, one social background category (Brezina et al. 2016). In this thesis, homogeneity is calculated using the shares of educational fields and occupations in the respective social background categories. The individual parties are then compared on the level

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\*\* European Commission (2004) Guidelines on the assessment of horizontal mergers under the Council Regulation on the control of concentrations between undertakings. Official Journal of the European Union, C 31, 5.2.2004, p. 5–18.  
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2004:031:0005:0018:en:PDF>

of homogeneity to observe whether the surviving parties were more homogeneous than the parties that disintegrated. In addition, I also provide percentage shares of dominant categories where relevant.

After collecting all the necessary social background data on party elites, I sort them into more general categories to make the calculations of the normalized Herfindahl index more precise. In the case of educational fields, this means sorting the specific study programs into subcategories according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) and its latest revision of the ISCED Fields of Education and Training Classification (ISCED-F 2013)<sup>††</sup>. For the purpose of calculating the NHI for the homogeneity of educational backgrounds, the narrow educational fields of the party elites are merged into general fields of education according to the ISCED-F 2013 classification, which can be found in Table 7.1 in the appendix.

The category of previous occupational experience lists all the relevant occupations in which the selected party elites were active and are likewise sorted into generalized categories. For this purpose, I use the International Standard Classification of Occupations and its current version (ISCO-08)<sup>‡‡</sup>, which is a classification structure of jobs created by the International Labour Organization. My research uses the two-digit codes of the ISCO-08 sub-major groups, which is the second most generalized set of groups after the 10 major groups. The exact codes and names of all the sub-major groups used in this research are listed in Table 7.2 (Appendix). The NHI is calculated using the shares of each sub-major group in the total number of all sub-major groups present in a party.

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<sup>††</sup> UNESCO. 2015. *International Standard Classification of Education: ISCED 2013*.

<http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-fields-of-education-and-training-2013-detailed-field-descriptions-2015-en.pdf>

<sup>‡‡</sup> International Labour Organization. 2012. *International Standard Classification of Occupations: ISCO-08*.

[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_172572.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_172572.pdf)

The remaining social background category of organizational links supplements the NHI calculations with a qualitative analysis in which I explain if any found organizational links between the party elites contributed to their social background homogeneity. I am looking for links within any organizational structure, i.e., if two or more party elites previously worked together in the same organization, company or political party.

## Results and analysis

The following table 1.2 presents the results of the research. The research period is the respective party's first electoral term. The table then presents the results of the control variable – ratio of women to men in the parties. The next columns proceed to showcase the independent variable – the calculated values of the normalized Herfindahl Index for the educational and occupational homogeneity. In the last column, the ultimate fate of the parties in their first term, the dependent variable, is determined. All the collected data, including the previous organizational links between party members, it to be found in the tables in the Appendix.

Table 1.2 Research results

Party	Period	Gender Composition	Educational Homogeneity	Occupational Homogeneity	Fate
ANO	2002-2006	18% F - 82% M	NHI = 0.033	NHI = 0.056	Disintegrated
SAS	2012-2012	15% F - 85% M	NHI = 0.069	NHI = 0.126	Survived
OĽANO	2012-2016	25% F - 75% M	NHI = 0.043	NHI = 0.032	Survived
SIEŤ	2016-2020	33% F - 67% M	NHI = 0.128	NHI = 0.106	Disintegrated
ZA ĽUDÍ	2020-2023	44% F - 56% M	NHI = 0.054	NHI = 0.097	Disintegrated

The results do not support the hypothesis, as they are incongruent and did not generate any high homogeneities in the researched educational or occupational backgrounds of party elites, and the values of the calculated normalized Herfindahl index were mostly assessed as low concentration. These results thus make the comparison of the cases implausible. I will analyze

the results within the cases, provide more context of the parties and try to come up with alternative explanations and, where possible, try to look for patterns that are in line with the hypothesis. The previous organizational links among party elites revealed certain specifics of the OĽaNO party which will be accounted for in the section pertaining to this party.

The highest homogeneity of educational backgrounds was found among the elites of Siet', as the normalized Herfindahl index was calculated as 0.128, which is considered a moderate concentration. The other 4 parties had similar values of the NHI in their educational backgrounds, which are all assessed as low homogeneities. The NHI for SaS was 0.069, for ANO it was calculated as 0.033, the value for OĽaNO resulted in 0.043, and for Za Ľudí it was 0.054. Since ANO, Siet' and Za Ľudí all organizationally failed and disintegrated, while SaS and OĽaNO survived, the results of the research suggest that homogeneity of educational backgrounds does not affect new party survival, as I cannot observe the patterns that I expected.

In the second social background category of previous occupational experience, the results are also mixed and don't confirm the hypothesis. The surviving parties SaS and OĽaNO had a homogeneity according to the NHI of 0.126 for the first party and 0.032 for the latter, which are very contrasting results. I expected a high homogeneity score for SaS considering its very high prevalence of entrepreneurs among its elites, where 16 out of 26, or 62% have this occupational experience. The share is even higher when looking at the party leadership, 77%. According to the ISCO-08, the sub-major group of Chief executives, Senior officials and Legislators was dominantly represented, but the overall NHI score was brought down by the large number of weakly represented other groups. While SaS had the highest measured homogeneity of all the parties, the one for OĽaNO was the lowest and no occupation dominated the composition. The disintegrated ANO recorded a relatively higher but still quite low NHI

value of 0.056. The party had a relatively high prevalence of elites occupied in the categories of Chief executives, Senior officials; and Legislators and Legal, Social and Cultural professionals, both represented among 9 of the elites. The other disintegrated party Siet' recorded a medium concentration value of the NHI, 0.106. This surprising NHI was achieved by the large share of the ISCO-08 categories 11 and 26, the same as in ANO but in this case, the other occupations were very weakly represented. The disintegrated Za Ľudí achieved a NHI value of 0.097, which is also low, but just below the threshold of medium concentration.

When assessing the findings in the last category of organizational links, I can conclude it did not contribute much to the research as there were too few previous organizational links in the parties to contribute to party cohesion and survival, apart from OĽaNO, which I will assess in the party's section.

I controlled for gender in my research, as there was indication in the theory that parties with a higher share of women could be more resilient to disintegration. Since the two parties with the highest percentage of women among its elites, Siet' and Za Ľudí, both disintegrated, I can effectively reject this variable as an alternative explanation. However, it should also be noted that I could not test this theory in a case of a party with a women majority composition, as such a case was not available.

Aliancia Nového Občana – Alliance of the New Citizen (ANO) was a political party founded in 2001 by well-known entrepreneur and manager Pavol Rusko. Rusko was the founder and owner of Slovakia's largest commercial television station, Markíza. ANO was successful in its first parliamentary elections in 2002, winning 8.01% of the vote and 15 seats in the National Council. Capitalizing on its success, the party also joined a coalition government led by Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda of the SDKÚ. For ANO, this governmental and parliamentary period was marked by internal divisions as well as external conflicts with its coalition partners,

which led to the gradual defections and expulsions of its elites, and ultimately to the disintegration of the party. The party experienced a major split in 2005 following a highly publicized corruption scandal involving party leader Pavol Rusko, which triggered further defections and even the expulsion of 12 of its elites. This left ANO with only three MPs and at the end of the electoral period, only 5 out of all the 22 party elites still remained in the party. In the subsequent 2006 parliamentary elections, the party ran with a largely replaced elite structure and won only 1.42% of the vote, well below the 5% threshold. ANO never ran in another election after that and was completely transformed and renamed into another party in 2011.

The elites of ANO had mostly completed their higher education in Business, Administration and Law, which was listed among 32% of the elites (7). 18% or 4 of the elites were engineering graduates and the rest of the individual education fields accounted to either 14 or 9 percent.

The founder and chairman of ANO, Pavol Rusko recruited three other persons for his political party from the TV channel Markíza which he owned and directed. These worked in Rusko's TV as either journalists or managers and became members of the party's leadership, constituting the only previous organizational links in the party. The wider party leadership was composed of as much as 14 elites and thus a shared working experience within the same organization among only 4 of these elites did not contribute strongly to the overall homogeneity of the party.

Sloboda a Solidarita – Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) was founded in 2009 by entrepreneur and economist Richard Sulík, who also became the party's leader. After winning 12.14% of the vote in the 2010 elections, the party became part of Prime Minister Iveta Radičová's right-wing coalition government. SaS became notorious for its role in bringing down the Radičová government in October 2011, just a year and a half after it was formed. The party strongly opposed Slovakia's participation in the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), which the

other parties in the government wanted to pass. Hoping to force SaS to vote in favor of the EFSF, PM Radičová tied the vote to a vote of confidence in the government, but all SaS MPs abstained from voting and thus the government fell that day. The party's popularity declined, and in the 2012 early parliamentary elections it won only 5.88% of the vote, barely passing the 5% threshold. The party survived its first term without disintegrating and was re-elected to the National Council in all the following elections.

In SaS, the most common broad field of education was Business, Administration and Law which encompassed 10 of its elites, or 39%. It was followed by the category of elites with no higher education completed (19%), Education and Engineering both accounted for 15%.

Obyčajní Ľudia a Nezávislé Osobnosti - Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLaNO) was founded by Igor Matovič, Erika Jurinová, Jozef Viskupič and Martin Fecko on 28 October 2011, shortly after the fall of Prime Minister Radičová's government in October 2011. The four founders were independent MPs during the 2010–2012 election period, having been elected to the National Council thanks to winning enough preferential votes on the SaS party list. Since they had never been members of SaS, which was part of the government in that electoral period, the four MPs were organized in a voluntary association called Obyčajní Ľudia – Ordinary People (OL) and were part of the SaS parliamentary group, except for the leader Matovič. Thanks to this previous parliamentary and organizational experience of the four founding members, the newly formed political movement OLaNO had a better chance of success in the early parliamentary elections of 2012. Despite several scandals in the run-up to the 2012 elections, the movement was successful in the elections, winning 8.55% of the vote and 16 seats in the 150-seat National Council (Dolný and Malová 2017). During the 2012-2016 electoral period, it experienced 5 member defections, which did not affect the existence of its parliamentary club. The party survived and increased its share of seats after the 2016 elections,

and even managed to shockingly win the 2020 elections. This grouping of politicians was heavily dependent on its 4 leading persons and particularly on Igor Matovič. As described by Dolný and Malová (2017), the success and functioning of the party depends entirely on Matovič and his popularity and ability to provide a place for non-party activists. Politically, he was described by the authors as being „extremely aggressive and confrontational, and he often uses unconventional methods to attract media attention“ (Dolný and Malová 2017, 405).

In OĽaNO, the highest proportion of its elites had graduated from fields in the Education field, 31%. Business, Administration and Law had a share of 25% and the field of Health and Welfare was shared among 19% of the party elites.

There are certain specifics of this political movement that are of major importance for this study and need to be defined. The organizational structures of OĽaNO are unique in the Slovak party system and it could be classified as a cadre party. It was officially comprised solely of the 4 previous MPs of OĽ and it did not seek to develop any regional structures. The party formally met only the minimum legal obligations for party establishment and did not pursue the recruitment of new members (Dolný and Malová 2017). In the process of building a party list for the 2012 elections, the leadership had invited only independent candidates to fill the remaining 146 places. Even though all the MPs elected for OĽaNO in 2012 were grouped together in the National Council under a single parliamentary group, which itself presents some form of an organizational structure, they often voted individually and did not seek to achieve a voting consensus.

An important discovery in the research of organizational links between the members of OĽaNO revealed more than just the described experience and previous organization within the voluntary association OĽ, which was founded before the 2010 elections. The 3 of only 4 members of the party leadership and the party itself, also share a common organizational background and

professional links. The party president Matovič and vice-presidents Jurinová and Viskupič had all worked together in the regional publishing company RegionPRESS owned by Matovič. Erika Jurinová had been employed in the company since 2003, first as a sales agent and later as head of its editorial office, while Jozef Viskupič had worked for there since 2002 as a project manager in the IT section. As both had worked for Matovič in his company before being politically active in OL, these professional and organizational links should contribute heavily to the party cohesion and its survival. This explained non-standard character of OĽaNO makes the party highly resistant to disintegration. As most of its elected MPs in the studied electoral period were not part of traditional party structures and only members of the parliamentary group, the homogeneity of social backgrounds and thus cohesion outside of the leadership did not have a negative effect on its survival chances. Organizational survival of this party can thus be explained by its described unique characteristics and strong organizational links in its leadership.

The elite composition of the party's parliamentary club, from which the NHI values were calculated, shows a strong heterogeneity. NHI of 0.043 for educational and only 0.032 for occupational backgrounds are a very low concentration, especially for the latter category which is also the lowest recorded homogeneity out of all the parties. There were also no organizational links between the MPs, apart from the mentioned members of the leadership. Despite this strong heterogeneity of social backgrounds among the MPs, the party's parliamentary club did not disintegrate, as would be expected from the results. The explained nature of this party and its cohesive leadership through their strong organizational ties explains the survival of this party but does not explain the survival of its heterogenous parliamentary club. Therefore, it is not possible to confirm the hypothesis in this case.

Siet' – Network was founded in June 2014 by three MPs Radoslav Procházka (of KDH), Miroslav Beblavý (of SDKÚ-DS) and Andrej Hrnčiar (of Most-Híd). This was shortly after the future party leader Procházka came third in the March 2014 presidential elections. In the 2016 parliamentary elections, Siet' won 5.6% of the vote and 10 seats in the National Council and subsequently joined the government coalition led by Prime Minister Robert Fico of Smer-SD. The decision to join this government was seen as controversial and induced a split within the party, which ultimately proved fatal for the immature party, as it lost all its MPs and elites by 10 May 2017, just over a year after its parliamentary breakthrough. Prior to the elections, the party presented itself as an opponent of the ruling Smer-SD, with Procházka himself declaring his refusal to cooperate with the party in the future. Soon after the 2016 elections, however, the party leadership was faced with a scandal regarding secret negotiations with Smer-SD over a future coalition government, which led to a split in the party, with 5 out of 9 members of the party's presidium in favor of such government participation (Mikušovič 2018). Following this division, the party started losing its elites and MPs, who left the party and joined other parties and parliamentary clubs. The leader of Siet', Procházka, also left the party after resigning from his role as president and giving up his parliamentary mandate as well. The Siet' presidency was taken over by the party's only minister in the government, Roman Brecely, who later resigned from his ministerial position and who left the party on 10 May 2017, the last party elite to do so (Aktuality.sk 2017).

The party elites had completed their higher education predominantly in the field of Business, Administration and Law (ISCED 04), which was shared among 7 out of 15 party elites, which represents 47%. Social and Behavioral Sciences also constituted a frequent field among the Siet' elites, of whom 5 share this educational background.

The three founders of Siet' were former members of three different right wing parties and were of heterogeneous social backgrounds, both educational and occupational. In terms of their occupational experience prior to their political careers in the National Council, Procházka was a lawyer, Hrnčiar a former stage actor and later mayor of the city of Martin, and Beblavý, a former economist and analyst for various organizations, president of a policy institute as well as former secretary of state at the Ministry of labor, social affairs and family. The described founding members were later joined by other persons, among whom were Eduard Adamčík, who helped Procházka with his presidential campaign and was also a former member of KDĽ, or Beblavý's former party companion and fellow MP Martin Fedor (Mikušovič 2016). These were the only previously shared organizational links found in my research and were too marginal to contribute to the overall homogeneity and cohesion of the disintegrated party. Even the party's relatively high share of women among its elite ranks, 33%, which was the highest percentage among the researched parties, did not help the party hold together, as would be assumed by the theory behind the related control variable.

Za Ľudí – For the People was founded in September 2019 by the former Slovak president, Andrej Kiska. Before he was elected for president for 5 years in 2014, Kiska was known as an entrepreneur and philanthropist and was not involved in any political party until the one he founded. He decided not to run for re-election to the presidency and made it publicly known that his ambition was to win the parliamentary elections and become Prime Minister. Za Ľudí was the only new political party that managed to succeed in the 2020 parliamentary elections, winning 5.77% of the vote and 12 seats in the National Council, making it the smallest party in the parliament. After the disappointing election result, the party joined the new coalition government led by Prime Minister Igor Matovič (OĽaNO). “[A]s coalition negotiations began, Kiska publicized his health problems and chose to step back from the running of his party,

provoking a leadership election and posing questions about Za Ľudí's future direction and survival" (Haughton et al., 2022, 749). Kiska left the party, resigned his seat in the parliament and disappeared from political life. Veronika Remišová, the party's first vice-president and former MP for OĽaNO, was elected as the new party leader and since then, the party has been steadily losing its MPs as well as voter support. The party was known to be divided into a liberal and a conservative wing, which often clashed with each other (TASR 2021b). After numerous defections throughout 2021, the party's parliamentary club dissolved in September of that year, as it no longer had the required eight MPs, but only three. Two of them left the party in April 2023, leaving the party with only one last member in the National Council. Therefore, since the parliamentary club of Za Ľudí was dissolved, the party is considered disintegrated in this thesis. The measured homogeneity of educational backgrounds was calculated as  $NHI=0.057$ , which is considered low. The most prevalent categories of higher education attained among the elites of Za Ľudí were Social Sciences, Journalism and Information along with Business Administration and Law, and were each represented among 5 elites. The other categories were not significantly represented.

The result for the previous occupations category was likewise considered low concentration with a NHI of 0.097, which comes just short of being classified as moderate concentration. The composition shows a dominant category of Chief executives, senior officials and legislators (ISCO 11), which was found in 12 out of 18 party elites. This confirms the party was composed of a relatively high number of people with previous political experience. The NHI value was likely brought down by the numerous occupational experiences these elites had before entering politics. Previous organizational links did not provide any useful insight in this case. Andrej Kiska brought three people into the party who had been working as his advisors during his presidency: MPs Luciak, Marcinková and Lehotský. They were among the first to leave the party and were known to be loyal to Kiska, so in the case of these three, it would make sense

they left the party. These were the only previous organizational links I was able to establish in this party. The found links were insignificant and thus cannot properly help explain the fate of the party.

I expected a party comprised of a higher number of experienced politicians would fare better and be more resilient to disintegration, so in this case I can discard this alternative explanation of party survival. External observation assumes the party disintegrated because of its sudden leadership change, the conflicting nature and undemocratic practices of the new leader, as well as the mentioned ideological, liberal-conservative division inside the party.

## **Discussion**

Since the hypothesis could not be confirmed, alternative explanations of the studied phenomenon and limitations of this thesis need to be addressed. It may be for instance that the theory is better suited to specific parties, such as large successful new parties founded by political entrepreneurs or magnates, such as the Czech ANO party and its leader Andrej Babiš, as evidenced by Cirhan and Kopecky (2017) in their paper. This can be partly supported by my own findings in the case of OĽaNO, although on a much smaller scale. The theory could be tested in future research using only these specific new parties. Therefore, as shown in this research, it is possible the theory might not be generally applicable to traditional and small parties. The limitation of this research could have been the chosen measurement using the normalized Herfindahl index, as well as the chosen research design itself. I would expect that for future research, the theory-testing would benefit from an interview-based research design as it would provide valuable insight to the internal party dynamics and would help confirm or infirm the versions of crucial intra-party events circulating in the media.

I can also speculate that party size can play a role in the survival of new parties as larger parties have better capacity to deal with defections as they can replace their defected members more

effectively. All the parties that were available and selected for this research can be considered small parties in terms of the number of seats won in the parliament, as well as party membership size, even though the exact figures are not available to me. New parties that manage to win a significant share of the vote could then be expected to have a higher chance of survival as they can afford to lose more members than the small parties. This is also of importance for the persistence of a party's parliamentary club, which requires 8 MPs for its existence in the National Council. Local party organization and developed party structures can also provide alternative explanations. Parties with more developed party structures might be better equipped to handle the precarious first parliamentary term as they can be more resilient to leadership changes, conflicts and defections. The scope of this thesis however does not make the research of party structures and local party organization feasible. Future research could therefore compare new successful parties that differ significantly on the independent variable of party size.

The survival of a new party could also be affected by political decisions made by the party leadership during their first parliamentary term. If political decisions and voting behavior negatively impact the party's voter support, it could lead to conflicts, divisions and defections even in a socially homogenous party.

There are also limits as to where political science can reach in its analysis and research due to the nature of politics and lack of complete information, as there is a lot happening behind the scenes. Therefore, the true reasons for party disintegration may sometimes be hidden from citizens, media and scholars alike, and this must be taken into account when conducting this type of research. Furthermore, since politics is conducted by human beings who are social beings, psychology and other fields could also provide explanations for the cohesive or incohesive behavior of humans grouped in a political entity. Unfortunately, this would require

an extensive psychological analysis and knowledge of the psychological profiles of many politicians and therefore this would prove impossible.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis aimed to broaden the existing research on the success and survival of new political parties in European multiparty systems by testing whether the homogeneity of social backgrounds of party elites can contribute to the organizational survival of new political parties by enhancing their cohesion. I collected resourceful data on the social backgrounds of party elites in five new political parties in Slovakia and computed the level of homogeneity among the elites using the normalized Herfindahl Index. The research yielded mixed results and I could not confirm the hypothesis. I addressed the limitations of the research and came up with alternative explanations, as well as ideas for future research on the topic.

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## Appendix

Table 2.1 ANO: Party elites in the electoral period 2002 – 2006

Name	Gender	Party Role	Party Defection
Pavol Rusko	M	President, MP, Gov.	
Imrich Béreš	M	Vice-president, MP	Left in 2003
Anton Danko	M	Vice-president, MP	Left in 2003
Ľubomír Lintner	M	Vice-president, MP	Expelled in 2005
Robert Nemcsics	M	VP, MP, Government	Left in 2003
Eva Černá	F	Presidium, MP	
Jozef Banáš	M	Presidium, MP	Left in 2004
Branislav Opaterný	M	Presidium, MP, Gov.	Left in 2003
Ján Drgonec	M	Presidium, MP	Left in 2005
Jirko Malchárek	M	Presidium, MP	Expelled in 2005
Jozef Heriban	M	Presidium, MP	Left in 2005
Beáta Brestenská	F	Presidium, MP	
Rudolf Chmel	M	MP, Government	Expelled in 2005
František Tóth	M	MP, Government	Expelled in 2005
Rudolf Zajac	M	MP, Government	Expelled in 2005
Viktor Béreš	M	MP	Left in 2005
Peter Biroš	M	Presidium, MP	Expelled in 2005

Imrich Hamarčák	M	MP	Expelled in 2005
Iveta Henzélyová	F	MP	Left in 2005
Kamila Jandžíková	F	MP	
Stanislav Kropilák	M	Presidium, MP	Expelled in 2005
Vlastimil Ondrejka	M	MP	

Table 2.2 ANO: Educational backgrounds (NHI = 0.033)

Name	Field of Education	ISCED Code
Pavol Rusko	Journalism and Information	03
Imrich Béreš	Business and Administration	04
Anton Danko	Manufacturing and Processing	07
Ľubomír Lintnter	Journalism and Information	03
Robert Nemcsics	Business and Administration	04
Eva Černá	Welfare	09
Jozef Banáš	Business and Administration	04
Branislav Opaterný	Physical Sciences	05
Ján Drgonec	Law	04
Jirko Malchárek	Engineering	07
Jozef Heriban	Humanities	02
Beáta Brestenská	Physical Sciences, Education	05, 01
Rudolf Chmel	Humanities	02
František Tóth	Engineering	07
Rudolf Zajac	Health	09
Viktor Béreš	Business and Administration	04
Peter Biroš	Health	09
Imrich Hamarčák	Engineering	07
Iveta Henzélyová	Education	01
Kamila Jandžíková	Education	01
Stanislav Kropilák	Law	04
Vlastimil Ondrejka	Law	04

Table 2.3 ANO: Occupational backgrounds and organizational links (NHI = 0.056)

Name	Previous Occupational Experience	ISCO Code	Organizational links
Pavol Rusko	Manager, Entrepreneur, Journalist	12, 11, 26	TV Markiza
Imrich Béreš	Financial specialist, Manager, Folkorist	24, 13, 26	
Anton Danko	City vicemayor, Sports referee, Mining supervisor	11, 34, 31	
Ľubomír Lintnter	Journalist, Chief editor, Audio-technician	26, 35	TV Markiza
Robert Nemcsics	Manager, Entrepreneur	11, 12	

Eva Černá	Journalist	26	TV Markiza
Jozef Banáš	Manager, Writer, Diplomat	26, 11, 13	
Branislav Opaterný	Programmer, IT Consultant, Entrepreneur	25, 11	
Ján Drgonec	Lawyer, Judge, Legal Scientist	26	
Jirko Malchárek	MP, Entrepreneur, Racing driver	11, 34	
Jozef Heriban	Manager, Screenwriter	12, 26	TV Markiza
Beáta Brestenská	University lecturer	23	
Rudolf Chmel	Literary scientist, Uni. lecturer, NGO President	23, 26, 11	
František Tóth	Teacher, School Principal	13, 23	
Rudolf Zajac	Doctor, Hospital CEO	22, 13	
Viktor Béreš	Project Manager	24	
Peter Biroš	Doctor	22	
Imrich Hamarčák	Entrepreneur, State secretary, MP	11	
Iveta Henzélyová	Teacher, School Principal	23, 13	
Kamila Jandžíková	Manager	12	
Stanislav Kropilák	Basketball player, Sporting director	34, 13	
Vlastimil Ondrejka	City mayor, Lawyer	11, 26	

Table 3.1 SAS: Party elites in the electoral period 2010 – 2012

Name	Gender	Party Role	Party Defection
Richard Sulík	M	President, MP	
Jozef Mihál	M	Vice-President, MP, Government	
Juraj Miškov	M	Vice-President, MP, Government	
Ľubomír Galko	M	Vice-President, MP, Government	
Jana Kiššová	F	Presidium, MP	
Martin Chren	M	Presidium, MP, State executive	
Stanislav Fořt	M	Presidium, MP	
Pavol Hladký	M	Presidium, MP	
Martin Poliačik	M	Presidium, MP	
Szilárd Somogyi	M	Presidium, MP	
Richard Švihura	M	Presidium, MP	
František Ksenzsih	M	Presidium member	
Robert Mistrík	M	Presidium member	
Daniel Krajcer	M	MP, Government	
Jozef Kollár	M	MP	
Lucia Nicholsonová	F	MP, State executive	
Juraj Droba	M	MP	
Natália Blahová	F	MP	

Ľudovít Jurčák	M	MP
Peter Kalist	M	MP
Kamil Krnáč	M	MP
Štefan Tomčo	M	MP
Zuzana Aštaryová	F	MP
Jaroslav Suja	M	MP
Ľuboš Majer	M	MP
Milan Laurenčík	M	MP

Table 3.2 SAS: Educational backgrounds (NHI = 0.069)

Name	Field of Education	ISCED Code
Richard Sulík	Business and Administration	04
Jozef Mihál	Information and Communication Tech.	06
Juraj Miškov	Journalism, Business and Administration	03, 04
Ľubomír Galko	Information and Communication Tech.	06
Jana Kiššová	Business and Administration	04
Martin Chren	Business and Administration	04
Stanislav Fořt	Business and Administration, Law	04
Pavol Hladký	Physical Sciences, Education	05, 01
Martin Poliačik	Humanities, Education	02, 01
Szilárd Somogyi	-	-
Richard Švihura	Business and Administration	04
František Ksenzsih	Engineering	07
Robert Mistrík	Physical Sciences	05
Daniel Krajcer	Law	04
Jozef Kollár	Business and Administration	04
Lucia Nicholsonová	-	-
Juraj Droba	Business and Administration, Education	04, 01
Natália Blahová	Education, Welfare	01, 09
Ľudovít Jurčák	Engineering	07
Peter Kalist	Health	09
Kamil Krnáč	Information and Communication Tech.	06
Štefan Tomčo	Engineering	07
Zuzana Aštaryová	-	-
Jaroslav Suja	-	-
Ľuboš Majer	-	-
Milan Laurenčík	Engineering	07

Table 3.3 SAS: Occupational backgrounds and organizational links (NHI = 0.126)

Name	Previous Occupational Experience	ISCO Code	Organizational Links
Richard Sulík	Entrepreneur, Economist, Governmental adviser	11, 26	
Jozef Mihál	Entrepreneur, Financial specialist, Gov. adviser	11, 24	
Juraj Miškov	Entrepreneur, Advertising professional	11, 24	
Ľubomír Galko	Manager and CEO in retail, Software developer	11, 14, 25	
Jana Kiššová	HR Manager, Entrepreneur	11, 12	
Martin Chren	Entrepreneur, Financial specialist, Org. director	11, 24	
Stanislav Fořt	Entrepreneur, Financial specialist, Manager	11, 24, 13	Young Liberals
Pavol Hladký	Entrepreneur	11	
Martin Poliačik	Teacher	23	
Szilárd Somogyi	Entrepreneur, Manager	11, 13	
Richard Švihura	MP Assistant, Political youth organization president	11	Young Liberals
František Ksenzsih	Army officer, maintenance and tech. Worker	01, 74	
Robert Mistrík	Scientist, Entrepreneur	11, 21	
Daniel Krajcer	TV Moderator, Manager	26, 12	
Jozef Kollár	Manager in banking, Economist, Entrepreneur	11, 13, 26	
Lucia Nicholsonová	Reporter, Entrepreneur	11, 26	
Juraj Droba	Manager, Entrepreneur	11, 12	
Natália Blahová	Social worker, Teacher	26, 23	
Ľudovít Jurčík	Project Manager	24	
Peter Kalist	Doctor, Manager in Healthcare	22, 13	
Kamil Krnáč	IT Project Manager	25	
Štefan Tomčo	Entrepreneur	11	
Zuzana Aštaryová	Accountant	24	
Jaroslav Suja	Entrepreneur	11	
Ľuboš Majer	Entrepreneur, Technician	11, 31	
Milan Laurenčík	Entrepreneur, Technician, Municipal politician	11, 31	

Table 4.1 OĽaNO Party elites in the electoral period 2012 – 2016

Name	Gender	Party Role	Party Defection
Igor Matovič	M	President, MP	
Erika Jurinová	F	Vice-President, MP	
Jozef Viskupič	M	Vice-President, MP	
Martin Fecko	M	Vice-President, MP	
Štefan Kuffa	M	MP	Left in 2015
Alojz Hlina	M	MP	Left in 2012
Mikuláš Huba	M	MP	Left in 2014
Eva Horváthová	F	MP	
Richard Vasečka	M	MP	
Branislav Škripek	M	MP	
Ján Mičovský	M	MP	
Miroslav Kadúč	M	MP	Left in 2015
Helena Mezenská	F	MP	
Peter Pollák	M	MP	
Mária Ritomská	F	MP	Left in 2013
Igor Hraško	M	MP	

Table 4.2 OĽaNO: Educational backgrounds (NHI = 0.043)

Name	Field of Education	ISCED Code
Igor Matovič	Business and Administration	04
Erika Jurinová	Manufacturing and Processing, Education	07, 01
Jozef Viskupič	Education, Journalism and Information	01, 03
Martin Fecko	Agriculture	08
Štefan Kuffa	Education, Welfare	01, 09
Alojz Hlina	-	-
Mikuláš Huba	Physical Sciences	05
Eva Horváthová	Health	09
Richard Vasečka	Theology (Humanities), Education	02, 01
Branislav Škripek	Theology (Humanities)	02
Ján Mičovský	Forestry	08
Miroslav Kadúč	Law, Business and Administration	04
Helena Mezenská	Education	01
Peter Pollák	Welfare	09
Mária Ritomská	Law	04
Igor Hraško	Engineering	07

Table 4.3 OĽaNO: Occupational backgrounds and organizational links (NHI = 0.032)

Name	Previous Occupational Experience	ISCO Code	Organizational Links
Igor Matovič	MP, Entrepreneur	11	Regionpress, OĽ
Erika Jurinová	MP, Teacher, Chief editor	11, 23, 26	Regionpress, OĽ
Jozef Viskupič	MP, Project manager, Entrepreneur	11, 24	Regionpress, OĽ
Martin Fecko	MP, Land Registry worker and specialist	21, 33	OĽ
Štefan Kuffa	Employment agent, Hospice manager	33, 13	
Alojz Hlina	Entrepreneur, Manager in agriculture	11, 13	
Mikuláš Huba	Scientist, Environmentalist, University lecturer	21, 23	
Eva Horváthová	Doctor, University lecturer	22, 23	
Richard Vasečka	Teacher	23	
Branislav Škripek	Evangelic preacher, Translator	34, 26	
Ján Mičovský	Specialist and Manager in forestry	21, 13	
Miroslav Kadúč	Lawyer	26	Assistant to Matovič
Helena Mezenská	Municipal politician, Mediator	11, 34,	
Peter Pollák	University lecturer, Project manager	23, 24	
Mária Ritomská	Lawyer	26	
Igor Hraško	Folklorist, Dance teacher	26, 23	

Table 5.1 SIEŤ: Party elites in the electoral period 2016 – 2020

Name	Gender	Party Role	Party Defection
Radoslav Procházka	M	President, MP	Left in 2016
Andrej Hrnčiar	M	1st Vice-President, MP	Left in 2016
Miroslav Beblavý	M	Vice-President, MP	Left in 2016
Katarína Macháčková	F	Vice-President, MP	Left in 2016
Katarína Cséfalvayová	F	Vice-President, MP	Left in 2016
Eduard Adamčík	M	Vice-President, MP	Left in 2016
Roman Brecely	M	Government minister	Left in 2017
Alena Bašistová	F	MP	Left in 2017
Igor Janckulík	M	MP	Left in 2016
Martin Fedor	M	MP	Left in 2016
Simona Petřík	F	MP	Left in 2016
Zuzana Zimenová	F	MP	Left in 2016
Tomáš Stoklasa	M	Presidium	Left in 2016

Martin Kapitulík	M	Presidium	Left in 2016
Martin Ďurišin	M	Presidium	Left in 2016

Table 5.2 SIEŤ: Educational backgrounds (NHI = 0.128)

Name	Field of Education	ISCED Code
Radoslav Procházka	Law	04
Andrej Hrnčiar	Arts	02
Miroslav Beblavý	Social and Behavioural Sciences	03
Katarína Macháčková	Law	04
Katarína Cséfalvayová	Social and Behavioural Sciences	03
Eduard Adamčík	Business and Administration	04
Roman Brecely	Engineering, Business and Administration	07, 04
Alena Bašistová	Welfare, Business and Administration	09, 04
Igor Janckulík	-	-
Martin Fedor	Social and Behavioural Sciences	03
Simona Petřík	Social and Behavioural Sciences	03
Zuzana Zimenová	Education, Humanities	01, 02
Tomáš Stoklasa	Law	04
Martin Kapitulík	Business and Administration	04
Martin Ďurišin	Social and Behavioural Sciences	03

Table 5.3 SIEŤ: Occupational backgrounds and organizational links (NHI = 0.106)

Name	Previous Occupational Experience	ISCO Code	Organizational Links
Radoslav Procházka	MP, Lawyer	11, 26	KDH Party
Andrej Hrnčiar	MP, City mayor, Stage actor	11, 26	
Miroslav Beblavý	MP, Economist, State secretary, NGO president	11, 26	SDKU Party
Katarína Macháčková	City mayor, Lawyer	11, 26	
Katarína Cséfalvayová	University lecturer, Faculty sub-dean	23, 13	
Eduard Adamčík	Manager, Tax administration official	12, 33, 24	KDH Party
Roman Brecely	Manager	12	
Alena Bašistová	Manager, Social worker, University lecturer	26, 13, 23	
Igor Janckulík	Entrepreneur	11	
Martin Fedor	MP, State secretary	11	SDKU Party
Simona Petřík	Entrepreneur	11	
Zuzana Zimenová	Teacher, Education analyst, Editor	23, 26	

Tomáš Stoklasa	Lawyer	26
Martin Kapitulík	Municipal politician, Economist	11, 26
Martin Ďurišin	Teacher, University lecturer, Political scientist	23, 26

Table 6.1 Za Ľudí: Party elites in the electoral period 2020 – 2023

Name	Gender	Party Role	Party Defection
Andrej Kiska	M	President	Left in 2020
Veronika Remišová	F	1st Vice-President, Gov.	
Jana Žitňanská	F	Vice-President, MP	Left in 2023
Juraj Šeliga	M	Vice-President, MP	Left in 2023
Vladimír Ledecký	M	Vice-President, MP	Left in 2021
Michal Luciak	M	Vice-President, MP	Left in 2021
Mária Kolíková	F	Presidium, Government	Left in 2021
Miroslav Kollár	M	Presidium, MP	Left in 2021
Tomáš Valášek	M	Presidium, MP	Left in 2021
Marek Hattas	M	Presidium, MP	Left in 2021
Vladimíra Marcinková	F	Presidium, MP	Left in 2021
Marek Antal	M	Presidium, Sub. MP	Left in 2021
Martin Oravec	M	Presidium	
Viera Leščáková	F	Presidium	
Tomáš Lehotský	M	Substitute MP	Left in 2021
Alexandra Pivková	F	Substitute MP	
Miriám Šuteková	F	Substitute MP	
Andrea Letanovská	F	Substitute MP	Left in 2021

Table 6.2 Za Ľudí: Educational backgrounds (NHI = 0.054)

Name	Field of Education	ISCED Code
Andrej Kiska	Engineering	07
Veronika Remišová	Arts, Social and Behavioural Sciences	02, 03
Jana Žitňanská	Journalism	03
Juraj Šeliga	Law	04
Vladimír Ledecký	Welfare	09
Michal Luciak	Social and Behavioural Sciences	03
Mária Kolíková	Law	04
Miroslav Kollár	Business and Administration	04
Tomáš Valášek	Social and Behavioural Sciences	03
Marek Hattas	-	-
Vladimíra Marcinková	Law	04

Marek Antal	Information and Communication Tech.	06
Martin Oravec	Social and Behavioural Sciences	03
Viera Leščáková	Education	01
Tomáš Lehotský	Business and Administration	04
Alexandra Pivková	Humanities, Education	01, 02
Miriám Šuteková	Humanities	02
Andrea Letanovská	Healthcare	09

Table 6.3 Za Ľudí: Occupational backgrounds and organizational links (NHI = 0.097)

Name	Previous Occupational Experience	ISCO Code	Organizational Links
Andrej Kiska	President of the Slovak republic, Entrepreneur, Manager	11, 12	
Veronika Remišová	MP, Municipal politician, Policy officer	11, 24	
Jana Žitňanská	MP, MEP, Journalist	11, 26	
Juraj Šeliga	Lawyer	26	
Vladimír Ledecký	Mayor, Municipal politician	11	
Michal Luciak	Administration professional, Political adviser	24, 11	Advisor to Kiska
Mária Kolíková	Lawyer, State secretary	26, 11	
Miroslav Kollár	Mayor, Journalist, Analyst, Manager/CEO	11, 26, 12	
Tomáš Valášek	Diplomat, Analyst	11, 26	
Marek Hattas	Mayor, IT programmer, Cultural centre director	11, 25, 14	
Vladimíra Marcinková	Administration professional	24	Advisor to Kiska
Marek Antal	Manager in IT	13	
Martin Oravec	Project manager in finance, Investment director	24, 12	
Viera Leščáková	Municipal politician, Teacher, School principal	11, 23, 13	
Tomáš Lehotský	Project manager in healthcare and finance	24	Advisor to Kiska
Alexandra Pivková	Mayor, Psychologist, Civil servant, Manager in Public Admin.	11, 26, 24, 12	
Miriám Šuteková	Municipal politician, Entrepreneur, Manager in Public Admin.	11, 12	
Andrea Letanovská	Doctor, Chief physician in hospital	22, 13	

Table 7.1 International Standard Classification Of Education: Fields of education and training  
2013 (ISCED-F 2013)

ISCED Code	Field of Education
00	Generic programmes and qualifications
01	Education
02	Arts and Humanities
03	Social Sciences, Journalism and Information
04	Business, Administration and Law
05	Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics
06	Information and Communication Technologies
07	Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction
08	Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary
09	Health and Welfare
10	Services

Table 7.2 ISCO-08 Codes used in this research

ISCO Code	Sub-major Group Name
11	Chief executives, senior officials and legislators
12	Administrative and commercial managers
13	Production and specialized services managers
14	Hospitality, retail and other services managers
21	Science and engineering professionals
22	Health professionals
23	Teaching professionals
24	Business and administration professionals
25	Information and communications technology professionals
26	Legal, social and cultural professionals
31	Science and engineering associate professionals
33	Business and administration associate professionals
34	Legal, social, cultural and related associate professionals
35	Information and communications technicians
74	Electrical and electronic trades workers
01	Commissioned armed forces officers